

Discussion Questions for *Karen from the Mill* by Anne Ipsen

Here are some of my suggestions for a discussion about *Karen from the Mill*. If it is not practical to address all of them in one meeting, you could pick one or two of them beforehand to help discussants to prepare.

1. The island of Fanø in the 1870's is one of the main "characters" in the book. Describe 1-2 two scenes or incidents that you found particularly interesting or different from your own experience.

2. As a writer, I don't always know how the plot will develop until the first draft is complete and sometimes several themes come to be and are interwoven. *Karen* has several themes or plot threads. Identify and discuss some of these.

3. The reader knows Lars-Anne mostly from Karen's sixteen-year-old point of view. What does Karen think of her mother? Does finding out about her mother's past influence how Karen feels about her mother or about herself? Do you think Lars-Anne's personality or motives are really as Karen views them? Do any of their differences of opinion resemble discussions with your own mother or teenage daughter?

4. I designed each of the secondary characters to have a specific role in the book. Describe one of these characters and how you think he/she furthers the plot or contributes in other ways to the story.

5. Describe Peter's character and how it changes during the course of the story. Explain what is meant by "the double standard" of nineteenth century thinking and illustrate with incidents from the book.

6. Writers are often advised to: "show me, don't tell me." What does this mean? I used this technique to let the reader imagine what Karen looks like. Describe her looks. How do you know? Give several examples. What does Karen think of her own looks? Give examples of other points of view. Do you think that Karen's self-image changes during the story?

I am always interested to receive comments from readers about my work. Did you find these questions useful? Do you have others to suggest? For more information, visit my website: www.anneipsen.com and email me your comments by using the "Contact" menu to "write the author."